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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, June 17, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "AIDING THE ADVENTUROUS." Information about the "House Plan Exchange" from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering of the United States Department of Agriculture. Bulletin available, No. 1738-F, "Farmhouse Plans."

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Sometimes I think that the biggest adventure a family can have is to start building a home. This thrilling undertaking often begins for the farm couple during their courtship or soon after their marriage. And even though "she" may be a wonderful housewife, and "he" may be an expert mechanic, they are young and comparatively inexperienced in planning houses and supervising building. So they may make mistakes in the kind of house they build- the material they use, the way they arrange rooms and conveniences, where they locate entrances. Sometimes they have to endure these mistakes for the rest of their lives. Farmhouses are often occupied by two or more generations. In fact, the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering of the United States Department of Agriculture finds they should be built to last 60 years or more.

Many rural homes are built by local labor. The builder, who may know much about carpentry, but little about architecture, often recommends a type of house plan he is used to constructing or one for which he has drawings. People get accustomed to awkward arrangements of rooms. They don't notice that they have to cross the kitchen and interrupt the work to get to other rooms, or that closet space is lacking or that there are too many steps and levels. People thus tend to repeat faults in planning houses.

Another thing! The kind of house you build depends partly on the climate where you live. "Cape Cod" houses "hug the ground" because the people there have to face long, cold winters. Spanish-type houses provide for dark, cool interiors when the sun glares outside. Vermont farmers build covered passages from the house to the barn for use in cold weather. Southern cotton growers house their helpers and tenants in cabins away from the main farm home. It may be that a farmhouse plan which is in general use in one region would also be suited to the needs of people in another region.

Now suppose a young couple wanting to build a home could see a number of different ideas about houses, developed in different parts of the country. They might see, for example, that the big colonial kitchen of the South, planned for a house with many helpers, would not be nearly as convenient for the young farm housewife working alone, as the more compact kitchen arrangement modern builders are recommending. They might decide that instead of the "square box" plan with a room in each corner, they preferred an "L" plan or a "T" plan or a long low house. They might compare the advantages of a "breakfast nook"



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with those of a large dining-room, and perhaps save money and gain living-room space by dispensing with a separate dining-room. They would perhaps adopt the "growing house" idea, starting out with a small unit that answered present needs but that conformed to a well-thought-out plan for future additions.

All very well, someone is thinking, but where is a young couple to see all these different plans and ideas about houses? The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering has the answer to that. It seems that about two years ago, 16 State Extension Services and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperated to assemble plans suitable for practical, moderate cost farm homes. Some of the house plans that were chosen might also do for city or suburban homes, but generally speaking, they are more suitable for farm homes because they take into consideration the connection between the farmer's business and his living quarters. Forty of these plans were printed in a Farmers' Bulletin, No. 1738-F. Arrangements were made with the extension services of some 40 of the State agricultural colleges to supply working drawings from these plans to anyone who wanted them. Most of the cooperating State services also can supply other plans suited to their regions. There is usually a small charge to cover the cost of producing and handling the blue prints. These prints give all necessary dimensions and details for building.

Particular care has been taken in all these plans to locate entrances and driveways conveniently for use, to plan the arrangement of the rooms correctly for their function, and to keep costs at a minimum. Every homemaker will be interested to know that all of the plans in Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F have been submitted to Dr. Louise Stanley, chief of the Bureau of Home Economics, for approval of the kitchen arrangement, and the relation between the kitchen and the other rooms. Step saving has been carefully thought out, and also the routing of work from one center to another. The placing of doors to nearby rooms has been considered so that travel across the kitchen would not interrupt work going on. In some houses, kitchens seem to be used as passageways to other rooms, don't they?

Another recent publication of the Department of Agriculture on building might be mentioned - No. 1749-F, "Modernizing Farmhouses." This, and Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F, "Farmhouse Plans," may be obtained by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for them.

With these helps, a young couple planning to build a home on a farm should be able to keep costs down and have an individual, attractive, and practical home.

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